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United States
Department of
Agriculture

Prepared by
Food Safety
and Quality
Service

Food News for Consumers

May 1981

ATX 501
FLK



USD Food Safety and Quality Service:

- Inspects and analyzes domestic and imported meat, poultry, and meat and poultry products
- Establishes ingredient standards and approves recipes and labels for processed meat and poultry products;
- Inspects and analyzes liquid, dried, and frozen egg products;
- Establishes grade standards for fruits, vegetables, meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products, and provides grading services for these foods on request;
- Monitors the food industry for violations of inspection and grading laws; and
- Buys food for the USDA school lunch program and other food assistance programs.

New Faces at USDA



Every new administration brings with it new faces. Here's a brief rundown of some key changes at USDA, beginning at the top: John R. Block, former Illinois Director of Agriculture, was sworn in as USDA secretary on Jan. 23. Block has a farming background, having managed a family-owned farm in Illinois since 1960.

Block's deputy, Richard E. Lyng, was sworn in on Feb. 24. A former assistant secretary of agriculture for marketing and consumer activities, Lyng has also been president of the American Meat Institute and director of the California State Department of Agriculture. Seeley G. Lodwick was sworn in April 10 as under secretary for international affairs and commodity programs. The former Iowa farmer, agricultural consultant, and legislator has extensive experience in managing government farm programs.

Other recent appointments: C. W. McMillan as assistant secretary of agriculture for marketing and transportation services. McMillan, a former executive with the National Cattlemen's Association, will be in charge of the Food Safety and Quality Service, the Agricultural Marketing Service, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, the Federal Grain Inspection Service, the Office of Transportation, and the Agricultural Cooperative Service. McMillan's deputy is John Ford. Ford has served in USDA's Office of the General Counsel and in the Agricultural Marketing Service.

William Gene Leshner has been appointed assistant secretary of agriculture for economics. Leshner had been chief economist for the U.S. Senate committee on agriculture, nutrition, and forestry since August 1980, and will have responsibility for the Economics and Statistics Service and the Office of Budget, Planning, and Evaluation.

Secretary Block has also appointed G. William Hoagland administrator of the Food and Nutrition Service. Hoagland was formerly with the Congressional Budget Office.

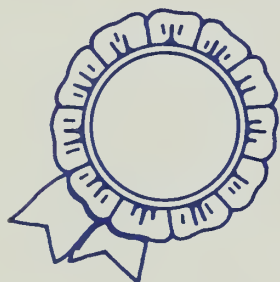
Secretary Block Speaks on Food Safety

USDA Secretary Block, in a speech to the National Food Policy Conference held in Washington in April, has reasserted his commitment to a sound food safety policy. "I want to assure you," he said, "that this administration of USDA will vigorously uphold our responsibility to protect the nation's meat and poultry supply."

Block pointed out that this year, the 75th anniversary year of the Meat Inspection Act, is a good time to "consider the future of the inspection program. We're looking...at reforms in slaughter inspection and (at) voluntary quality control. We're also considering giving the Secretary more discretionary authority to tailor inspection resources to the needs of individual processing plants."

For more information, request copies of speech #429-81 from: USDA News Center, 404-A, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.

Food Safety Poster Contest Winners Announced



"Don't Hesitate, Refrigerate; When in Doubt, Throw It Out" was the message second grader Cari Ugent of Dyer, Ind. used to win first prize in USDA's first annual food safety poster contest. Cari's entry won in the kindergarten through grade three category, USDA Assistant Secretary C. W. McMillan announced on April 20.

First prize winner for grades four through six was Patricia Powers of Cinnaminson, N.J., whose poster shows children carrying signs with food safety tips.

About 45,000 elementary school students submitted entries in the contest, which is part of USDA's celebration of the 75th anniversary of passage of the Federal Meat Inspection Act. Students used information packets distributed by USDA to create posters illustrating any facet of food safety.

Cari and Patricia will each receive a \$100 U.S. Savings Bond and a trip to Washington, D.C. where they will receive their awards at the 75th anniversary ceremony June 10.

Among the contest judges were: Virginia Knauer, special assistant to President Reagan; Charles Smith, Children's TV Workshop, Sesame Street; Stephen Brobeck, Consumer Federation of America; and Karen Brown, Food Marketing Institute.

For more information: Press Release #478-81 (4-20-81).

How to Obtain Free Copies

Single free copies of press releases, Federal Register reprints, studies, fact sheets, and publications mentioned in the FSQS section of this newsletter are available from regional information offices across the country (see page 15) or from FSQS Information, Room 3949-S, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250. Phone: (202) 447-5223.

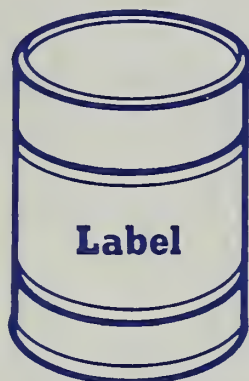
Where to Send Comments

Send your comments on proposals in the FSQS section to: Regulations Coordination Division, Room 2637-S, FSQS, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250. Usually two copies are requested. Be sure to identify the proposal you are commenting on by referring to the title of informal proposals or, for formal proposals, the date of publication in the Federal Register.

Tips on Writing Comments

For tips on how to give your comments more weight, write for the FSQS brochure called "Public Participation: Getting Involved in FSQS" (June 1980).

Pilot Label Approval Program Extended



USDA's pilot program for in-the-field approval of some meat and poultry product labels has been extended for 120 days, through July 29. It was extended to give USDA more experience with the procedures and to allow participating companies to continue receiving the benefits of the program.

USDA reviews all labels for meat and poultry products to be sure they are accurate and not misleading before the labels can be used on products sold in commerce.

Under the pilot program, some 300 inspectors in four states and Washington, D.C., have the authority to approve certain labels. The Washington label review office is auditing all labels approved by inspectors.

During the first three months of the pilot program, 73 plants took part, submitting 266 label applications. Most applications were returned to plant management the same day. On average, each application required a half-hour or less of the inspector's time.

The pilot program, which began Dec. 1, 1980, was originally intended to end at the close of March. Notice of the extension appeared in the March 27 Federal Register. Comments were not requested on the extension notice.

Turkey Ham Ruling

A U.S. Court of Appeals has upheld USDA's labeling requirements that permit a product made from cured turkey thigh meat to be labeled "turkey ham." On April 7 the Appeals Court ruled that USDA had followed proper administrative procedures when it developed its 1979 turkey ham labeling regulation. The Appeals Court ruling overturned an August 1980 District Court ruling and injunction against the regulation. The National Pork Producers Council, the American Meat Institute, and several meat processors brought the original suit.

The National Turkey Federation and two turkey processors appealed the District Court decision; USDA did not join this appeal. Since the Appeals Court lifted the injunction against the regulation pending outcome of the appeal, products labeled "turkey ham" have been on the market despite court action.

Turkey ham, a product consisting of boneless turkey thigh meat, closely resembles pork ham in taste, odor, and appearance. Under the labeling requirements, the product label must show the phrase "cured turkey thigh meat," immediately after the words, "turkey ham." This qualifying statement must be in lettering that is at least half the size of the name "turkey ham." The regulation also established a standard of composition for this turkey product to ensure it retains the nutritional and taste characteristics consumers associate with it.

Quality Control Inspection Approved for 20 Plants



USDA has approved the implementation of quality control inspection in 16 meat and poultry processing plants.

The most recent additions are: Bunge Edible Oil Co., Bradley, Ill.; Von's Grocery Co., El Monte, Calif.; Portiontrol Foods, Inc., Mansfield, Tex.; Lauderdale Farms, Florence, Ala.; Marv's Restaurant Supply Co., Brea, Calif.; Kubio Meat Co., Orange, Calif.; S. Clyde Weaver, E. Petersburg, Pa.; Alpha Beta Co., La Habra, Calif.; Lund's, Inc., Minneapolis, Minn.; Nelson's Minnesota Farms, Inc., Minneapolis, Minn.; three plants operated by Equity Meat Corp. at Folcroft, Pa., Cohoes, N.Y., and Nashville, Tenn.; Great American Basic Commodities, Inc., Plover, Wis.; Brakebush Bros., Inc., Westfield, Wis.; Chatham Meat Plant, Warren, Mich.; and Jimenez Food Products, Inc., San Antonio, Texas.

Quality Control continued

Quality control is a modernized inspection system that permits USDA inspectors to take advantage of the data generated from approved plant quality control systems. Plants may voluntarily apply for participation in the inspection system, and approval by USDA is based on assurances that products produced under the plant system will meet the wholesomeness and labeling requirements of the inspection laws.

The new inspection system is available to processing plants that produce such items as frankfurters, frozen dinners, and soups containing meat and poultry. It does not apply to inspection of animals in slaughtering plants.

For more information: Press Release #1615-80 (8-14-80); and a fact sheet on voluntary quality control (FSQS-46, October 1980).

Proposed Changes in Shell Egg Standards



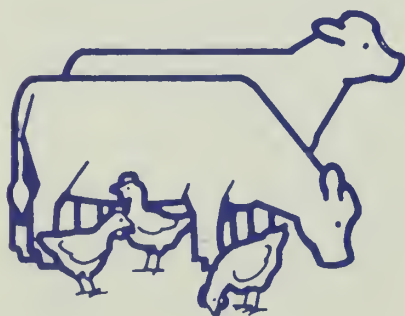
On April 17, USDA proposed changes in its grade standards for shell eggs. The changes are designed to make the standards more consistent with present industry technology, to make the grading system easier to use, and to make the grading standards more uniform.

USDA develops grading standards and provides grading services for many food commodities. And the agency is continually evaluating its grade standards to make sure they reflect current industry practice and are valuable to users of the grading service.

One of the changes would raise the maximum permissible percentage of "checks"--cracked shells--in shell eggs at retail stores. Although "checks" have cracked shells, the shell membranes are intact and the contents do not leak. Another change would increase the minimum percent of "A" quality eggs required for eggs to be labeled "U.S. Grade A" at both shipping point and retail store. Written comments should be sent by June 16 to Annie Johnson, Rm. 2637-S, FSQS, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.

For more information: Press Release #470-81 (4-17-81).

Meat and Poultry Inspectors Protect Billions of Pounds in 1980



During 1980, USDA meat and poultry inspectors were responsible for inspecting nearly 130 million head of livestock, 4.3 billion birds, and nearly 105 billion pounds of processed products. The secretary of agriculture is required by the federal inspection laws to report annually to Congress on meat and poultry inspection activities.

As of Sept. 30, 1980, there were 8,608 USDA inspectors working in 7,061 federally inspected slaughtering and processing plants in the United States.

During the year, 2.1 million pounds of fresh and processed meat were imported to the United States, and 10 million pounds were refused entry because they were found unacceptable during import inspection. Inspection officers made 2,602 reviews in 1980 of foreign plants certified to export to this country.

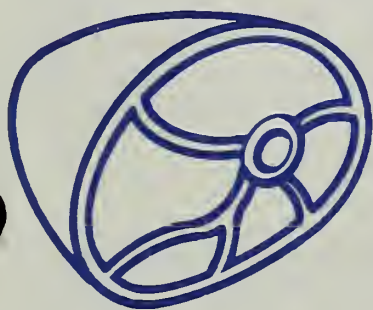
In addition, USDA processed nearly 104,000 labels for meat and poultry products and approved 90,064; reviewed 2,619 blueprints of plants and 1,032 equipment drawings; and conducted laboratory analyses of more than 200,000 meat and poultry samples.

Inspection continued

USDA reported that program improvements, most notably the implementation of a series of modernized inspection procedures, resulted in increased productivity.

For more information: Meat and Poultry Inspection 1980--A Report of the Secretary of Agriculture (March 1981).

Court Order Voids Parts of USDA Standards for Country Ham



Because of a court order, USDA cannot enforce the time and temperature requirements of its standards for country ham. The standards are not related to safety but instead insure that products have characteristics traditionally associated with the product before being labeled "country ham," "country style ham," or "dry cured ham."

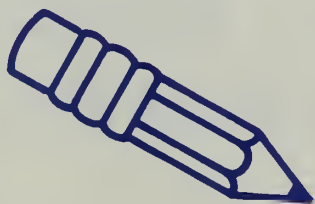
The U.S. District Court for the Western District of Tennessee struck down standards requiring minimum time periods and a maximum temperature during curing, salt equalization, and drying. The final court order came in response to a challenge by Tennessee Valley Hams, Inc.

Other provisions of the standards still must be met. For example, hams must be coated thoroughly with dry salts so they do not require refrigeration, and they must weigh at least 18 percent less than the fresh uncured product.

The parts of the standards struck down required that (1) the combined period for curing and salt equalization not be less than 45 days for hams and 25 days for pork shoulders; (2) the total time period for curing, salt equalization and drying not be less than 70 days for hams and 50 days for pork shoulders; and (3) during drying and smoking periods, the internal temperature not exceed 95°F (35°C).

For more information: Press Release #14-81 (1-6-81).

USDA Defers Decision on PCB Proposal



On March 6, USDA deferred final decision on its proposal to ban liquid polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) from federally-inspected meat, poultry, and egg product plants while the impact of a related court decision is studied.

Last summer, USDA, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Food and Drug Administration proposed banning PCB from electrical equipment used in food manufacturing and storage plants. Those proposals were based, in part, on existing EPA regulations.

In October 1980, the U.S. District Court of Appeals in Washington, D.C., ruled in a suit brought by the Environmental Defense Fund that EPA's existing regulations were in violation of the Toxic Substances Control Act. The court said evidence did not support EPA's decision to exclude from regulation all materials with PCB levels below 50 parts per million. And since the final resolution of EPA's 50 ppm rule affects USDA's proposal banning PCB-containing equipment, USDA set its proposal aside until that issue is resolved.

USDA has extended the comment period on the proposed PCB rule several times. In December, the agency set March 4, 1981 as the closing date for comments. Although USDA will not issue final PCB regulations until another official public comment period is provided, the agency will continue seeking public comments on its PCB proposal. Written comments should be sent to Annie Johnson, Rm. 2637-S, FSQS, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.

For more information: Press Release #258-81 (3-3-81).

Enforcing the Law

The following are some recent actions taken by FSQS to protect the nation's food supply.

falsified certificate



On Jan. 5, a USDA Administrative Law Judge ordered that federal meat grading and acceptance services be withdrawn for three years from Mirman Brothers, Inc., a Washington, D.C., meat plant. On six separate occasions, the firm delivered beef and pork products to a local hospital accompanied by false USDA acceptance certificates. The firm falsely represented that the products had been officially certified by USDA graders for conformance with contract specifications. Press Release #98-81 (1-23-81).

bribery of meat inspector

On Jan. 12, U.S. District Court, Trenton, N.J., fined Gerald David, Vice-President of Mlotak Beef Co., Inc., Linden, N.J., \$2,000 and placed him on two years probation for paying bribes to a USDA meat inspector. Charles C. Faulkner, the inspector assigned to the Mlotak plant, was fined \$3,000 and placed on three years probation in an earlier trial. He has since resigned. FSQS Release 2-3-81.

consent order violated

USDA will withdraw meat inspection and grading services indefinitely from Great Western Packing Co., Inc., Vernon, Calif., because it violated a consent order requiring isolation of previously convicted company officials from USDA personnel. The USDA Judicial Officer issued the order Nov. 5 based on complaints by USDA officials of repeated contacts and harassment by one of the firm's restricted employees. The order has been stayed until Great Western exhausts its judicial appeal. FSQS Release 2-9-81.

unsanitary conditions

On Feb. 13, USDA withdrew federal meat inspection service from Davenport Packing Co., Milan, Ill., because of unsanitary findings in continuing reviews by USDA officials. On April 22 inspection services were partially restored. Press Release #219-81 (2-20-81).

inspection service denied

USDA will withdraw meat inspection service indefinitely from Wyszynski Provision Co., Philadelphia, Pa., unless the firm's vice president, Walter J. Wyszynski, gives up all association with the firm and sells his company stock. The Feb. 13 decision was issued by the USDA Judicial Officer and upholds an earlier decision by a USDA Administrative Law Judge. The firm may appeal the Judicial Officer's order. FSQS Release 3-9-81.

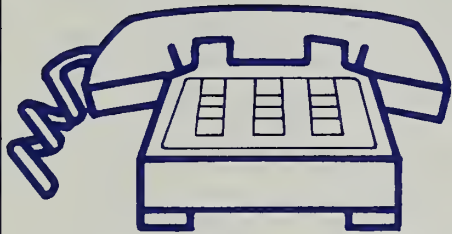
inspection service withdrawn



Toscony Provision Co., Inc., Union City, N.J., has appealed a Feb. 27 decision by a USDA Administrative Law Judge to the USDA Judicial Officer to withdraw meat inspection from the firm. Toscony was previously convicted of a felony in the U.S. District Court of New Jersey for knowingly distributing adulterated meat products. Under the order, the firm's president, Henry Dei, must completely separate himself from the company or it will face indefinite withdrawal of inspection. Press Release #308-81 (3-13-81).

court ruling stayed

As reported earlier, a USDA Judicial Officer has ruled that inspection service be withdrawn from Utica Packing Co., Utica, Mich., unless the firm's president separates himself from the company. A U.S. District Court later upheld that ruling. The court ruling is stayed pending a decision by Utica on whether it will appeal. The firm was found guilty in 1978 of bribing a federal meat inspector.



If you have a question or a problem with the safety or wholesomeness of a meat or poultry product, the truthfulness of its labeling, or the accuracy of a grade name, contact FSQS Consumer Inquiries, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250 or call (202) 472-4485.

Other FSQS News

USDA announces changes in brussels sprouts standards. Press Release #77-81 (1-19-81).

USDA reopens comment period on pilot label review program. Comment period ended Feb. 23. Press Release #88-81 (1-22-81).

Washington, D.C., meat plant loses grading services. Press Release #99-81 (1-23-81).

USDA seeks further comments on peanut standards. Press Release #139-81 (2-3-81).

Comment period reopened on proposal to accredit private laboratories. Press Release #143-81 (2-3-81).

USDA withdraws inspection service from Illinois meat plant. Press Release #219-81 (2-20-81).

USDA extends comment period on peanut standards to April 2. Press Release #262-81 (3-3-81).

USDA defers decision on PCB proposal. Press Release #258-81 (3-3-81).

New Jersey meat plant loses inspection service. Press Release #308-81 (3-13-81).

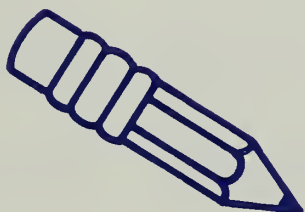
USDA pilot label approval program extended through July 29. Press Release #375-81 (3-27-81).

USDA proposes changes in shell egg grade standards. Press Release #470-81 (4-17-81).

USDA names winners in food safety poster contest. Press Release #478-81 (4-20-81).

USDA increases grading fees for processed fruits and vegetables. Press Release #502-81 (4-24-81).

USDA officials retain water requirement for livestock awaiting slaughter. Press Release #505-81 (4-24-81).



What's New from FSQS

Hamburger Q&A

See box on page 2 to order any of the following new materials from FSQS.

This publication answers questions consumers may have concerning the quality of ground beef they purchase and includes tips on freezing, thawing and cooking ground beef. Ask for FSQS-44 (March 1981).

What's New continued

Summertime Food Safety

Food Safety for the Family

Meat and Poultry Inspection-- A Program That Protects

"Summertime" provides help on the care and use of meat and poultry products during summer months. It gives advice on how to prevent food poisoning during picnics, backyard barbecues and other outdoor activities. To keep your outing from becoming a disaster, "Summertime Food Safety" also provides important tips in a question-and-answer format. Ask for FSQS-38 (December 1980).

This publication includes valuable tips on keeping food hot or cold and clean, a handy cooking chart, and specific information on handling hamburger, ham, poultry, eggs, hot dogs, lunch meats and canned foods. It also offers important information about what to do when the power fails and lists sources of food poisoning. Ask for FSQS-33 (December 1980).

This brochure is part of the consumer education package developed for this year's 75th anniversary of the Meat Inspection Act of 1906. It explains the inspection program as it operates in packinghouses, in processing plants, and throughout the food distribution system. The brochure contains numerous illustrations, and when unfolded, can be displayed as a poster. Ask for FSQS-50 (March 1981).

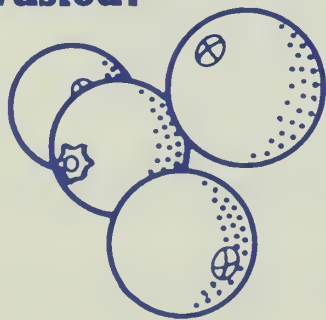
Agricultural Marketing Service



USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service:

- Gathers and disseminates current information on prices, supplies, and other market data;
- Provides cotton and tobacco standardization, inspection, grading, and testing services on request;
- Administers several regulatory programs designed to protect producers, handlers, and consumers from careless, deceptive, or fraudulent marketing practices;
- Administers marketing agreement and order programs to help establish and maintain the orderly marketing of milk, fruits, and vegetables;
- Provides patent protection to developers of certain novel plant varieties; and
- Monitors industry-sponsored and -financed research and promotion programs.

Oranges Being Wasted?



In response to questions from consumers and others about the federal marketing reports about oranges from this year's record crop that aren't reaching markets--USDA has prepared a backgrounder on the Navel Orange Marketing Order. The backgrounder explains that the purpose of the navel orange marketing order is to stabilize prices, avoid market gluts and shortages and make fruits available to consumers for longer periods of time each year. It also explains some oranges are undesirable for either fresh use or processing. This year some of these undesirable oranges were fed to cattle. The backgrounder is available from: Information Division, AMS, Rm. 2638-S, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.

Reconstituted Milk

USDA has denied a petition requesting that the department hold a hearing on the pricing of reconstituted milk. Under federal milk marketing orders, reconstituted milk is in the highest price category, Class I. Reconstituted milk is made by blending nonfat dry milk with butterfat and water.

Milk continued



The petitioners, which included the Community Nutrition Institute (a non-profit consumer group), three consumers, and a milk processor, had requested that reconstituted milk processed by handlers be placed in a lower price classification. They claimed the current pricing removes the incentive for processors to make available to consumers what petitioners believe could be an equally nutritious but lower-cost alternative to other fluid milk.

USDA Secretary Block cited several reasons for denying the petition. Among them:

- Consumers already have a lower-cost alternative to fresh milk because they can buy nonfat dry milk and reconstitute it themselves.
- The expected benefits to consumers would be much less than the loss of income to dairy farmers.

For more information: Press Release #419-81 (4-7-81).

Fruit and Vegetable Marketing Orders



A new USDA fact sheet on federal marketing orders explains that the orders do not prohibit sales of produce directly from growers to consumers. "Anyone who so chooses can deal directly with producers and buy better quality produce that meets marketing order standards," the fact sheet says.

Beyond this, it says, most marketing orders have "special exemption" provisions. These make it possible for growers to accomplish orderly marketing goals, yet meet the needs of consumers who want to buy produce that doesn't measure up to size requirements or is less mature or blemished.

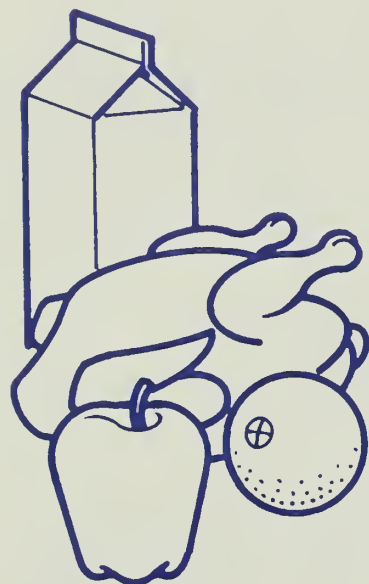
A marketing order is a means, backed up by law, whereby agricultural producers and handlers can tailor the supplies of their particular commodity to expected demand to improve their returns. Depending on the marketing order and commodity, requirements may be set to regulate the quality and sizes of the commodity marketed, the quantity, or both. Using assessments that handlers pay, research to improve production and marketing can be financed, as can market development activities including advertising. Growers initiate and design marketing orders with the cooperation of USDA.

The special exemption provisions vary depending on the particular federal marketing order program--there are 48, covering a wide variety of fruits, vegetables and specialty crops like nuts--and the characteristics of the commodity covered. A California peach grower, for instance, could sell each customer at the farm or at a nearby roadside stand as much as 200 pounds of peaches in any one day. While the fruit wouldn't have to meet the federal marketing order requirements, it would have to meet certain minimum grade and size requirements for peaches set by the state of California.

Most of the programs specify that the commodities in these exempted sales can't be resold, which means they must be used by the purchasers or their families.

The fact sheet can be obtained from: Information Division, AMS, Rm. 2638-S, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250. It lists more detailed publications available on marketing orders and offers a listing of public members on marketing order committees.

Food Forecast for May



Pork, broilers-fryers, turkey, milk, dairy products, oranges, apples, raisins, dried prunes, rice, dry beans, and dry peas all should be plentiful during May, according to USDA's Food Marketing Alert issued April 21.

Pork output will begin a seasonal decline in May, with weekly production rates averaging 7-9 percent below the record high rates of a year earlier but 6-8 percent above the 1978-80 average for the month. Broiler-fryer output should be 7-9 percent above the 1978-80 average for May, and turkey supplies should be 35-40 percent higher than the May average for the past three years.

Beef will be in adequate supply--enough to meet needs--with weekly output averaging 5-7 percent below the 1978-80 average for May.

Milk production in May will likely be the largest for any month since 1965. Output during the first three months of 1981 was 4-1/2 percent above the same period of last year. Supplies of dairy products are large and increasing, and government purchases under the dairy price support program have been record large during recent months.

Total production of California-Arizona navel and valencia oranges is the largest in history this season. About half the combined crop of navels and valencias will be shipped as fresh fruit to U.S. and Canadian markets, while the rest will be processed into products or exported. While smaller-size fruit predominate in this year's crop of navels, fruit quality is excellent. This season's valencias, which will be moving to markets in heavy volume during May, also are of high quality, and valencias are especially noted as the best oranges for juice.

The fall-winter apple harvest, a record-large one, has kept markets better supplied than usual for this time of year.

Besides beef, there should be adequate supplies of these items during May: eggs; fresh and frozen potatoes; fresh vegetables and melons--if weather holds; processed vegetables, including canned lima beans, green peas, tomatoes and tomato products; and citrus juices. While effects of Florida's freeze in January continue to be felt, supplies of frozen concentrated, chilled, and canned juices should be large enough to meet demand.

Food items expected to be in light supply during May include peanuts, because of a 1980 crop that was smallest since 1964; canned sweet corn; and fresh apricots, peaches, and sweet cherries. Harvest of these three deciduous fruits will be just beginning during May.

Monthly issues of Food Marketing Alert--along with special issues that cover certain foods that are in temporary oversupply in the marketplace--are distributed to the news media. Consumers should watch for this information in newspaper food pages, consumer broadcast programming, and Cooperative Extension Service bulletins.

USDA also distributes Food Marketing Alert to people who communicate with consumers, but not to individual consumers. For a sample copy and order blank, write: Information Division, AMS, Rm. 2638-S, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.

Economics and Statistics Service

USDA's Economics and Statistics Service:

- Gathers and provides information on the agricultural economy;
- Analyzes international activities of agricultural significance;
- Does research on commodities, food and nutrition, natural resources, and rural development; and
- Furnishes timely and objective economic and statistical information to farmers, other rural Americans, industries, consumers, and policy-makers.

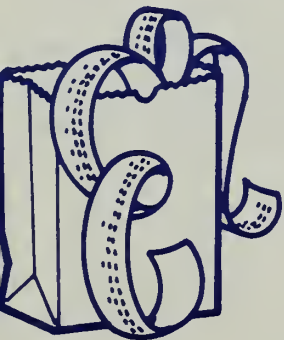
Food Prices: So Far, So Good

Granted, peanut butter is out of sight. But the food price situation generally in 1981 is unfolding about as predicted months ago: a 10 to 15 percent gain for the year, with 12 percent most likely.

While consumers hear most about travails with things like peanut butter and the freeze damage to citrus in Florida, other events provide some offsets.

Farmers have reported plans to put even more acreage into crops this year than they did last year. Earlier drought fears have abated some. And thanks to good crops being produced in Southern Hemisphere countries, demand for our farm product exports looks a little less strident now. Even so, new survey indications point to pork and beef supplies being every bit as tight later in 1981 as suggested earlier; feedlots hold the fewest cattle since 1975.

Fingering 1980's Food Price Villains and Good Guys



The facts are in and here's what happened. Food at grocery stores cost 8 percent more in 1980. It had gone up 11 percent the year before. Food prices at eating places rose nearly 10 percent. On average, all food prices rose 8.6 percent, the least in 3 years.

For farm foods of U.S. origin, prices rose only 7 percent. Imported foods and fish products leaped nearly 12 percent in price.

Higher charges by the food industry for processing and marketing U.S. farm foods caused over half the rise in prices. Higher prices for fish and imported foods caused a fourth of it, and only one-fifth came from higher farm prices.

For a full account, write for "Developments in Farm to Retail Price Spreads for Food Products in 1980," (#AER 465), from ESS, USDA, Information Staff, Room 0054-South Building, Washington, D.C. 20250.

Highly Perishable Foods No Media Favorites

Over half our grocery store food dollar spent goes for them--items like unprocessed meats, poultry and fish, eggs, fruits and vegetables, and dairy products. But you'd never know it from checking how many advertising dollars they attract.

Media Favorites continued

These perishable foods accounted for less than 8 percent of national media food advertising expenditures in 1978, and virtually none of the discount coupons distributed.

Meanwhile, another group of foods took only 20 percent of the consumer food dollar that year but accounted for half the advertising. Commercials focus heavily on these the highly processed foods--cereals, soft drinks, candy and desserts, oils and salad dressings, coffee, and prepared foods. Major media growth area for food ads: Radio-TV, with expenditures soaring from \$800 million in 1970 to \$2.1 billion in 1979.

Foreign-Owned Food Retailers



What do A&P, Grand Union, Albertson's, and National Tea have in common besides supermarkets? They're all foreign owned. It's a recent trend, too. In 1975 only six foreign-owned food retailers were operating in the United States. As of April 1980, foreign firms owned, wholly or partially, 23 U.S. grocery firms. Most foreign owners are European, with the West Germans leading the way in investments.

The share they control of the total market, however, is still minor. By the end of 1979, foreign investment in food manufacturing was about 5 percent of sales and 8 percent of total assets of U.S. food manufacturing.

Nonetheless, this kind of penetration dwarfs the more highly publicized inroads that foreign interests are making in U.S. agricultural land. At the start of this year, foreign investors owned just over half of one percent of all our agricultural land.

Food and Nutrition Service

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service:

- The food stamp program;
- The national school lunch and school breakfast programs;
- The special supplemental food program for women, infants, and children (WIC); and
- The food distribution, child care food, summer food service, special milk, and food service equipment assistance programs.

Income Standards Set for Supplemental Food Program

USDA has set maximum income limits for people who participate in the special supplemental food stamp program for women, infants, and children (WIC). The new limits will be effective July 1, 1981.

Under the rule, states must set a maximum gross income limit for a family of four that is no higher than \$15,490 and no lower than \$7,450 a year. The maximum income is determined by calculating 195 percent of the federal poverty line, then deducting a standard \$80 each month per family.

Income Standards
continued

Previously, each state set its own income limits. State agencies will now be allowed to use state or local income eligibility standards as the income limits for their WIC programs so long as these do not exceed or fall below the USDA limits.

The WIC program provides supplemental foods, nutrition education, and health care to low income women, infants, and children up to age five who are determined to be at risk because of inadequate diet or health care. The new regulations were published in the Jan. 23 Federal Register.

Science and Education Administration



USDA's Science and Education Administration:

- Plans and coordinates food and agriculture research, extension, and teaching efforts;
- Conducts federal research programs in the food and agricultural sciences;
- Communicates and demonstrates agricultural research results;
- Provides information and expertise needed by policy, regulatory, and action agencies of USDA and other federal departments; and
- Provides information systems and library services in the food and agricultural sciences.

Correct Food Preparation and Hygiene Prevent Food Poisoning

Often when people suffer symptoms of food poisoning, they blame salmonella for their gastrointestinal discomfort. However, within the past several years, scientists including Leroy C. Blankenship, a microbiologist with USDA's Russell Research Center in Athens, Ga., have recognized that other bacteria, including one identified as *Campylobacter*, can cause similar symptoms and may be responsible for many cases of gastrointestinal illness.

The bacterium enters the body in contaminated foods and if present in sufficient numbers may cause cramps, diarrhea and abdominal distress. Some evidence suggests that certain foods, inadequately cooked, could be a source of the bacterium.

Food Preparation continued

Research indicates that *Campylobacter* is killed by ordinary cooking procedures--in fact, by temperatures slightly lower than those required to kill salmonella.

Of course, cooked foods or raw foods such as salads can be contaminated by contact with food preparation surfaces, unless those surfaces are thoroughly cleaned after each use. If contaminated foods are kept at room temperature for a long period (3 hours or more, for instance) bacterial growth may increase enough to cause illness when the food is consumed.

Health problems associated with food-poisoning bacteria such as salmonella and *Campylobacter* can be prevented through hygienic practices in the kitchen, adequate cooking, and care in serving and storing.

Hand Cleaner Made from Oranges



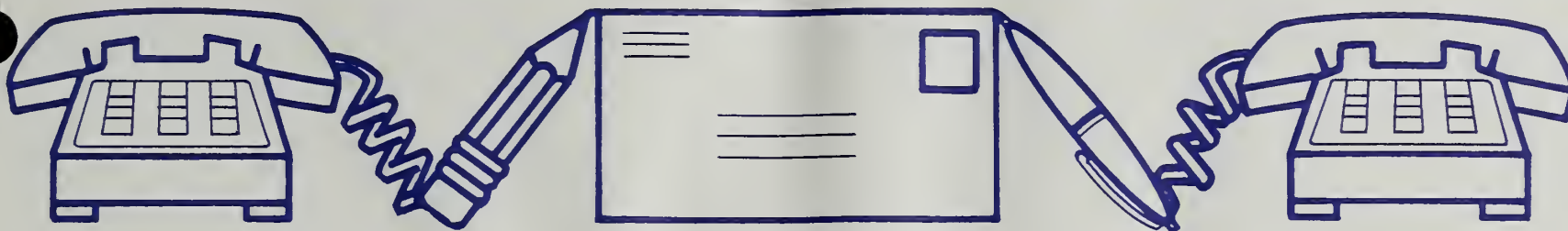
Oranges are proving to be not only a nutritious fruit but also an effective hand cleaner and engine degreaser.

USDA scientists in Winter Haven, Fla., found that combining oil extracted from orange peels with water and a cleaning agent produces a milky-white hand cleaner. The product, now available commercially, has a pleasant fragrance, leaves no oily residue, and is not harsh to skin.

The orange oil can also be used as an effective degreaser--to clean a car engine or motorcycle, for example.

Microwave Cooking Maintains Vitamin Content of Foods

Not only are microwave ovens a time-saving convenience for people with busy schedules, but they also have another advantage. Meat and fresh or frozen vegetables cooked in microwave ovens retain the same levels of nutrients such as vitamin B, folacin, thiamin and vitamin C, as they would cooked in more conventional ways. Moreover, research conducted at the University of Illinois Agricultural Experiment Station indicates that because less water is used when boiling them, the vegetables may actually contain more vitamins, since there is less leaching of vitamins into the cooking water.



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